

ACADEMY NEWS LETTER

NUMBER 240

DECEMBER 1959

December Announcement

THE REGULAR DECEMBER MEETING of the California Academy of Sciences will be held at 8:15 P.M., Wednesday, December 16, in the May Treat Morrison Auditorium. Dr. Earl S. Herald, curator of aquatic biology at Steinhart Aquarium, will present an illustrated lecture entitled:

"THE WONDER WORLD OF FISHES"

Known to thousands of television viewers as host for the Academy's popular, prize-winning program, "Science in Action," and to his scientific cohorts nationally for his work in the field of ichthyology, Dr. Herald has long been fascinated by the unique, the odd and the unusual which occur in the watery world of fish.

In his lecture, Dr. Herald will be dealing with bizarre facts, fantasies and legends which occur in the often placid-seeming but actually turbulent and dramatic world which lies nethermost below wind and wave. Such fascinating subjects as "The Shark and Arm Murder Case" which happened some years ago in Sydney, Australia, and the legendary "*Ompax spatuloides* Hoax" will be but two of the peculiar, unexpected and seemingly impossible situations which Dr. Herald will discuss.

Dr. Herald completed his higher education at the University of California and Stanford University. During the Bikini tests he conducted extensive governmental reef fishes investigations and was staff ichthyologist to the Vanderbilt Expedition of 1951. He has been head of Steinhart Aquarium since 1948 and host to televiewers on "Science in Action" since 1951.

JANUARY MEETING

ON JANUARY 16 "The Land the Glaciers Forgot," the second in the 1959-1960 series of Audubon Screen Tours, will be the color film presented at the regular monthly Academy meeting. Howard L. Orians of Madison, Wisconsin, will be the featured speaker.



WILLIAM B. PITTS
1867-1959

WILLIAM BURTON PITTS, Honorary Curator of Gem Minerals in the California Academy of Sciences, died in Atlanta, Georgia—amid the scenes of his youth—on October 28, 1959, a few days before his ninety-second birthday. He was a bachelor, and he had outlived his generation; but he was not alone. Sometimes referred to by the dignified term, “dean of American lapidaries,” he was affectionately known to literally thousands of amateur and professional mineralogists as “Uncle Billy Pitts”; and though his name only occasionally appeared in the public prints, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that he was one of the most widely known and universally loved men in America.

His interest in gem minerals brought him into correspondence with many people in many lands; and apparently the charm of his personality carried over into his correspondence. A few years ago when he was briefly hospitalized for one of the few illnesses of his long life, a woman lapidary in Germany sent a sum of money to the Academy by air mail with the message, “Please send Mr. Pitts some flowers.” This posed something of a problem, because in the meantime Mr. Pitts had gotten well and was bustling around as cheerfully and energetically as ever. We got out of this dilemma by waiting a short time and then advising the German lady that we had sent flowers to Mr. Pitts in her name on the occasion of his 90th birthday.

Mr. Pitts was born near Thomasville, Georgia, November 10, 1867. There he grew up and received his early education. On the advice of his grandfather, who had been an army surgeon in the War of 1812, he decided to become a pharmacist, and learned this profession by the only method then available—apprenticeship in a drug store. For the first year he received one hundred dollars in wages, for the second year one hundred fifty. Then as a full-fledged pharmacist he migrated from Thomasville to Atlanta, where he worked as a prescription clerk in Jackson’s Pharmacy from 1895 to 1905. Very shortly he was head pharmacist, with two men working under him. On his own initiative, he began getting out a news letter to physicians, advising them of the new drugs that were available, and describing their properties. Thus he became a pioneer in a field that has since been widely exploited.

After ten years in the drug business in Atlanta, Mr. Pitts was told by his physician that he should change jobs; the drug business was too confining. Immediately he found a way to combine the advice of his physician with his training as a pharmacist and his talent for salesmanship; he went on the road as a salesman for a German pharmaceutical firm, selling their products to American druggists.

Just why being a traveling salesman should be easier on a man than working in a drug store is not immediately evident; but it agreed with Mr. Pitts and he became one of the famous traveling salesmen of all time. His province was the United States, and he completed the circuit once every two years. He made friends everywhere he went, and often referred to himself as “the happy traveler,” and sent post cards which read “Happy on the way.”

World War I brought him a temporary disaster. The German drug firm he was representing could no longer do business in the United States, and for the first time in his life Mr. Pitts was out of a job. In this emergency, a friend intro-

duced him to Mr. William Horlick, who immediately hired him and put him on the road selling Horlick's Malted Milk, which he did for thirty years until he retired. It is doubtful that many salesmen for Horlick's are acquainted with the top management. Mr. Pitts was hired personally by the head man, and enjoyed a warm friendship with him until Mr. Horlick's death.

It is sometimes difficult to realize how far back the memories of a man past ninety go. Mr. Pitts once set this writer back on his heels by casually remarking, "When I came to San Francisco I used to stay at the Lick House." The Lick House was destroyed in the earthquake and fire of 1906. In that year Mr. Pitts was 38 years old.

In the autumn of 1906 Mr. Pitts was in Gardner's Drug Store in San Bernardino when he met a prospector from Death Valley called "Shady" Myrick who had an attractive bloodstone. Shady had earned his name, not because he was a shady character, but by reason of the fact that—with sound common sense—he preferred to work in the shade. Mr. Pitts became interested in this bloodstone, and bought it. This started him on a long and happy career of collecting gem minerals, a pursuit he followed with undiminished ardor for more than half a century.

In 1925 Mr. Pitts retired and settled in a pleasant cottage at Sunnyvale, California, where he devoted his whole time to collecting and polishing gem minerals. In 1935—perhaps finding the rural life a little dull after so many years of travel—he moved his residence to San Francisco and his lapidary shop to the California Academy of Sciences. Here, as Honorary Curator of Gem Minerals, for more than two decades he enjoyed his life, received his friends, and continuously brought beauty out of the earth. His work is displayed not only in the Academy, where he built up one of the finest collections of gem minerals in America, but in almost every important museum in the United States. He received many honors and citations, and was elected to honorary life membership in at least ten mineralogical societies in different parts of the country.

Mr. Pitts was a Southern gentleman of the old school. He vigorously resented any Yankee criticism of Southern manners or mores, and voiced his objections in picturesque speech. Once he exploded to this writer:

"People say we say *you all*. Well, when we say *you all*, we MEAN *you all*. If I say, 'Now you listen to me—and you—and you,' that's all right. So if I say, 'Now *you all* listen to me,' what's wrong with that? Dammit, that's English!"

Following his retirement Mr. Pitts spent the greater part of his time in California; but every autumn he made a cross-country trip, visiting friends and visiting museums, and always winding up in Georgia and Florida to visit relatives and "go fishing"—fishing being his second hobby. After his ninety-first birthday he did not return to California, but remained near his boyhood home.

Age did not dim his enthusiasm for gem minerals, whose beauty he always regarded as a direct gift of God to man. If, as recorded in the Revelation of St. John the Divine (Chap. 21), the foundations of heaven are "garnished with all manner of precious stones . . . jasper . . . sapphire . . . chalcedony . . . emerald . . . beryl . . . topaz . . . amethyst," Uncle Billy Pitts will feel right at home.

CHRISTMAS PLANETARIUM SHOW

"THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM," Morrison Planetarium's traditional Christmas show, will begin on December 16 and continue through January 3 at its regularly scheduled times. There will be no performance on either Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

IN THE FIELD

MEMBERS OF THE STUDENT SECTION, taking advantage of some of the lower tides of the season, journeyed to Monterey Bay and Pacific Grove for a four-day field trip and the collecting of marine specimens. Headed by Section Supervisors Peter Benson and Dustin Chivers, ten students spent their Thanksgiving Holiday in making the collecting tour.

ACADEMY VISITORS

AFTER AN EXTENDED SURVEY devoted to noctuid moths and microlepidoptera made during the course of several months in Madera Canyon, Arizona, Dr. John H. Franclemont and Ronald Hodges, both of Cornell University, spent two additional days in November working with the collections in the Academy's Department of Entomology.

Also visiting the Department was Professor Norman B. Tindale, the well-known paleoentomologist and lepidopterist from the South Australian Museum of Adelaide, Australia. Professor Tindale's particular interest is ghost moths (Hepialidae).

"SCIENCE IN ACTION"

ON DECEMBER 14 "Science in Action" begins its 29th series of television programs.

Among the subjects to be dealt with in forthcoming programs will be "A Salute to Sir Isaac Newton" featuring Dr. Harvey White, Professor of Physics of the University of California; "Ulcers" with Leon Jacobson, M. D., of the Argonne Cancer Research Hospital at the University of Chicago; and "Pediatrics" which will have as guest scientist Robert Always, M. D., Dean of the Stanford Medical School, Stanford University.

LIBRARY GIFTS

MR. EVERETT E. FARWELL of Alameda, California, has presented the J. W. Mailliard, Jr., Library with a framed lithograph, "San Francisco, 1849," Schmidt Label and Lithograph Company, San Francisco, 1886.

On the occasion of the dedication of the new library, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Draper added a souvenir reprint of the "Emigrants' Guide to Pike's Peak" which was originally published in Leavenworth, Kansas Territory, March 1, 1859. The offset reproductions were printed in celebration of the centennial of the Colorado Gold Rush.

TRAVELING DOWN UNDER

MR. AND MRS. LEWIS S. ROSE have returned from a six-week holiday tour of Australia, New Zealand and Tasmania. Mr. Rose is a Research Associate in the Academy's Department of Botany. While in New Zealand, the Roses' path

crossed that of Mrs. Junea W. Kelly, a Fellow and Life Member of the Academy who was also touring Down Under with Mrs. Roberta J. Long, President of the Golden Gate Audubon Society.

AN ACADEMY CHRISTMAS CUE

"What shall I give.....for Christmas?" is a very familiar question. An ideal gift is a Family Membership in the Academy, which includes all family members of one household. Send your list of those to whom you would like to give such memberships together with your check (\$15 per Family Membership) to the Membership Chairman, California Academy of Sciences, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco 18, California. The Academy in turn will acknowledge your check and notify the recipients of your generous membership gift.

Also, would you send us the names and addresses of your friends, whom you believe would like to be invited to become members of the Academy? A self-addressed card is enclosed for this purpose.

And by the way, have YOU forwarded your Academy dues for 1960?

A CHANGE OF THE WIND

BEGINNING WITH THE JANUARY ISSUE, the ACADEMY NEWSLETTER will be coming to you in a new form. A different format with new features is planned and we sincerely hope that Academy members will find the change interesting and stimulating.

NEW MEMBERS

NEW MEMBERS who joined the Academy last month are:

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Crawford N. Cate	Miss Eileen V. Hughes
Mr. Dana K. Clark	Mr. Fintan J. Hughes
Mr. Roland W. Davis	Miss Janet Jahn
Mr. Leslie D. Dimmick	Dr. H. Lisser
Mrs. Philip K. Gilman	Mr. Charles E. Peterson
Miss Constance Hann	Mr. Louis Rossi, Jr.
Mrs. Evelyn Heinz	Mr. Karl J. Schultz

FAMILY MEMBERSHIP

Mr. and Mrs. Walther H. Buchen	Mrs. Herbert Moses
Mrs. Lillian Gilhousen	Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Smith
Mr. Eric R. Hall	Mr. Leendert A. Spoel
Mr. Alan H. Hanson	

CONTRIBUTING MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Francis E. Winter

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

Charles Novak
George Silva

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

THE FOLLOWING LETTER has been sent to lawyers suggesting that donations and bequests be made to the Academy. It is reproduced here for the information of all members and friends of the Academy.

CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
GOLDEN GATE PARK ✦ SAN FRANCISCO 18, CALIF.
TELEPHONE BAYVIEW 1-5100

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM
THE ALEXANDER F. MORRISON PLANETARIUM
THE STEINHART AQUARIUM

Dear Mr. ———:

The California Academy of Sciences is one of the basic scientific and educational institutions in the West. During the past century, it has gained an outstanding international reputation for scientific research, its collections, publications, its library, and its educational programs.

For the furtherance of its basic research—the kind that makes technological progress possible—the Academy depends upon membership dues, donations from individuals and corporations, and bequests. Such are deductible under federal and state tax laws.

Whenever you may be writing a will or advising friends or clients concerning donations and tax matters, may we suggest you consider the California Academy of Sciences. It is constantly making outstanding contributions to science. It needs funds for basic research, for preserving its valuable collections, for exhibits and educational programs, and for capital facilities. Many opportunities exist for undesignated, designated, and memorial gifts.

The attached brochure* describes some of the Academy's activities. We would welcome concrete questions concerning specific opportunities in which you and your friends may be particularly interested. Please remember the Academy, its importance to science and education, and its financial needs.

May we hear from you?

Sincerely,
WILSON MEYER

*Available upon request to readers of this *Newsletter*.

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LIBRARY
100 S. BURNBANK AVE.
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90024

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